

October 16, 2013

**NO INDIGENOUS CHILD,
NO CHILD,
SHOULD GROW UP IN A WORLD
WHERE PROFESSIONAL SPORTS AND MEDIA
PERSIST IN USING DISCRIMINATORY NAMES & MASCOTS.**

**CHANGE THE NAME
CHANGE THE MASCOT**

The battle for equality, and against prejudice, requires eternal vigilance for the long list of people subject to the bite of institutional discrimination – women, religious minorities, people of color, indigenous people, immigrants, seniors, LGBT people, poor people, people with physical and behavioral differences....

It is illegal in the United States to discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, physical difference or gender preference. We, the Indigenous People of America, are victims of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin and institutional ignorance. While many indigenous people choose to live their lives with pride and independence from the negative influences of institutional racism, it remains necessary to assert our equal rights as citizens of the United States through education and legal action.

The name for the Washington DC football team is a racial slur, an illegal form of hate speech and discrimination, that damages a protected class of people by denying us respect and equality: in the workplace, at government funded facilities and contractors, at public gatherings, over regulated airwaves, and in corporations producing electronic and print content. The “R” word has no place in a country of equals. No similar denigrating term for other protected classes of people would be tolerated, and we would not accept any such denigration of anyone. Yet, sports organizations, media organizations and many fans have inherited and perpetrated an immunity to the racism embedded in derogatory indigenous sports names and mascots, and the damage they do to the freedom of anyone to live their lives without experiencing prejudice or ridicule.

The argument or rationalization that indigenous sports mascots and racist names filled with fan tradition should somehow be immune from the laws of the land that protect people from discrimination hardly matches the damage to the heritage and traditions of indigenous people perpetrated by the mascots, by the names, and by centuries of desecration and injustice that continue to this day.

All Indigenous Mascots manufactured for professional and school sports teams by and for non-indigenous people are unwelcome caricatures that do not represent the religion, culture, beliefs and rich history of native people.

Moreover, there is overwhelming evidence from impartial academic research that unwelcome indigenous mascots and stereotypes and caricatures damage indigenous children, damage indigenous futures, and damage the perception of all protected classes.

While our actions are addressing offensive language and images, we want to be clear that our objective is to stop the damage to our children, and to all protected classes by asserting and seeking enforcement of the US Constitution and the many Federal, State, County, City and Municipal laws explicitly designed to protect us from harm.

We, the American Indian Movement, insist that all racist sports names and mascots that appropriate our names and images be changed by the media and by the perpetrators so that they can no longer harm our children, and deny indigenous people and all protected classes of people our civil rights.

We are a beautiful part of the fabric of the United States of America, as are all of our fellow brothers and sisters experiencing systemic injustice.

Appropriated Indigenous Mascots and Names are Institutionally Racist and contribute to severe hardships faced by many indigenous people. The extent of damage is unimaginable to all but us. Do your part to bring us all together.

The American Heritage Dictionary Definition of Redskin:

red-skin (rědskĭn')

n.

Offensive Slang

Used as a disparaging term for a Native American.

To the National Football League, the Washington DC Football Team, and to all other Professional & School Sports Teams & Stadium Authorities choosing to Appropriate Indigenous Names and Mascots:

This is a formal notification that your organization's choice to continue your appropriation of our religion and heritage and culture and images and leaders and language for your financial benefit and amusement, despite ample cures and alternatives, damages the self concept and income producing potential of indigenous children specifically, and all indigenous people as a protected class, and violates our civil rights.

On or before October 25, 2013, in advance of election day, we request that your organization publicly state your intention to Change Your Mascot & Name or your intent to continue to willfully harm a protected class of people.

We understand the inherited tradition of these names and mascots and the strong emotions they conjure. We believe that institutional racism is hard to change and we are asking you to begin that journey now. No indigenous sports mascot or name manufactured by and for non-indigenous people honors us, is welcomed by us, is celebrated without denigration, or is an accurate representation of our race, our religion and our heritage.

If after October 25, 2013 you plan to continue the use of caricatures of our names and our people indefinitely, we plan to consider the following actions to protect our people and our rights under the laws of our country:

We will explore the potential for a class action lawsuit naming your organization as a defendant. You are a willful party with the clear intent to continue to harm a class of protected people. Plaintiffs may include indigenous children, all indigenous people, and all protected classes. Damages may include lost income, psychological damage, medical expenses and punitive assessments. Our legal team includes attorneys associated with the successful tobacco and clean indoor air damage claims.

For the Washington Football Team and the Cleveland Baseball Team, because your mascots and names are so vulgar and denigrating, we will seek all legal and political remedies to protect indigenous people from your brand of hate, and from your blatant and illegal disregard for existing discrimination and labor law protections in code and statute.

We will seek Public Licensing and Public Regulatory remedies linked to your conscious disregard for and damage to the public interest, your disregard for FCC requirements, and your use of profane and grossly offensive language and images known to cause harm to children and members of the public.

We will pursue remedies including injunctions, bans and damages at the Federal, State, County, City, and Municipal levels – asking that they immediately enforce all applicable legal protections and remedies that exist in writing that are intended to protect employees, contractors, children and the general public from hate crimes and acts of discrimination, harassment, profanity and abuse.

We will organize people in your community to oppose your use of denigrating mascots, and we will pursue boycotts, protests and specific large scale boycott actions aimed at your advertisers.

We are asking you to change. A private organization has the right to freedom of speech but not the freedom to publicly incite racial hatred. Public organizations, publicly funded organizations, and corporations and organizations regulated by the public have a higher standard. They do not have the right to harm any class of people because of the color of their skin, or because of any other aspect of their appearance, origin or beliefs.

To the politicians in Wisconsin and elsewhere who are attempting to assert your ignorance and racism and political power to make it more difficult for schools to change their indigenous names and mascots, we ask you to stop the denigration and discrimination. We urge all citizens to vote for people who believe in an inclusive nation that does no harm to our children.

Once you have received this public notification, you may not hide any further behind your ignorance or tolerance. Your conscious choice to continue to harm a class of people must have just consequences if we are to preserve a union where all men and women are created equal. A simple remedy exists for the profound damage mascots cause by your use.

Use alternative words and images that communicate without harm. We look forward to hearing your public decision about the continuation of your discriminatory mascots and names before October 25th, 2013.

To the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority, the Minnesota Vikings, and the State of Minnesota:

We believe the Governor of the State of Minnesota, the Commissioners of the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority, and the Ownership of the Minnesota Vikings are publicly required to be aligned with our commitment to equality and human rights.

Your passage of the Construction Services Agreement Equity Plan is a powerful demonstration of the proactive protection and engagement of women, minorities and veterans in the economics of building a new sports facility for the people, and suggests you recognize your responsibility to pursue equality for all people.

We ask you, the publicly owned Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority, to not allow the posting on any electronic or print sign on your premises the discriminatory name of the DC team, or broadcast across the public address system the discriminatory name of the DC team, so that you can avoid creating an illegal and damaging workplace, an illegal and damaging event and an illegal and damaging accommodation. Many alternative forms of speech are available that do not offend, do not convey hate and do not denigrate a protected class of people.

On November 7, 2013, the Washington DC professional football team comes to Minneapolis to play football at the government funded and operated Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome where civil rights laws and labor laws prohibit discrimination of any kind and where over 200,000 nearby indigenous people live their lives.

Minnesota has a legacy of leading the nation in civil rights first with Hubert H. Humphrey, Walter Mondale and Paul Wellstone, and now with two strong Senators who support equality for all, Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken. Congresswoman McCollum has co-sponsored legislation to address the trademark protections for the Washington DC's discriminatory name ("R" word) and is a national leader against the continuation of sports mascots. Congressman Ellison is also a passionate defender of human rights.

Any print or broadcast use of the name currently utilized by the DC football team within the property owned by the people of Minnesota violates Federal labor laws, hate speech protections and broadcast decency licenses, violates State, City and County labor laws and civil rights protections, violates the operational and employment bylaws of the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority, and violates the civil rights of every indigenous person by denying us equal protection under the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Your responsibility is to the people of Minnesota. We will be at the October 25th meeting of the MSFA and ask that we have time on the agenda to discuss the opportunity for you to choose to be on the correct side of history, to make history, by honoring Federal, State and Local laws that clearly do not permit the “R” word, an explicit form of institutional racism, with explicit damage to indigenous people, from being seen or heard in the People’s Stadium. It is simply illegal.

If, on October 25th, 2013 you do not vote to follow the laws of the land, and proactively and publicly ban the use of the “R” word in the Metrodome, we plan, in addition to the actions identified for perpetrating teams, to consider pursuing appropriate actions which may include:

All remedies prohibiting the use of the “R” word and images at the Metrodome before or during the November 7th game using the many City, County, State, Federal and International laws designed to prohibit expressions of hatred based upon race or nationality. These include:

The Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority’s own harassment and offensive behavior policy that explicitly prohibits discrimination, harassment and offensive behavior.

The Minneapolis Ordinances designed to effectuate non discrimination and to protect minors.

The Minnesota Human Rights Act. We are prepared to deny or decertify MSFA’s certificate of compliance.

Further, we are prepared to bring this matter to International Attention. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of which the US is a signatory, prohibits “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination”. Further, racist names violate the International Declaration of Indigenous Rights which the US signed last year.

To Media Organizations including newspapers, electronic publishers, radio broadcasters, television and cable broadcasters, public address announcers and individuals covering professional sports:

We are asking you to consciously avoid the print and verbal use of all commercially manufactured indigenous sports team names, and similarly, consciously avoid the images of the names and mascots when covering these teams. We are asking you to refer to the teams using their city names and to use images that avoid as much as possible their unwelcome indigenous name and mascot images.

Individuals and organizations have acted to replace mascot words and images with alternatives that do not have damaging consequences. A partial and growing list includes:

Washington City Paper, Kansas City Star, DCist, Gregg Easterbrook (ESPN.com), Slate, Mother Jones, The New Republic, Peter King (Sports Illustrated and MMQB.com), Bill Simmons (ESPN and Grantland), Christine Brennan (USA Today), Mike Wise (Washington Post), Warren Pierce (WJR Radio).

Sadly, the Star Tribune chose a few years ago to reverse its policy honoring the civil rights of Indigenous People and now permits the regular use of the "R" word and unrestricted use of damaging Indigenous names and images. The recent appointment of a new editor offers an opportunity to immediately reset to a policy that does no harm to the children of America.

Greater sadness and disappointment comes from the Pioneer Press. In a recent telephone conversation, the editor of the Pioneer Press emphatically stated that his policy was to continue to report without editorial license the Indigenous team names and images, including the "R" word, until such time as the non-Indigenous teams changed their manufactured and damaging names and images.

The American Psychological Association, Indigenous Children, Indigenous Parents and tens of millions of citizens who believe in human equality ask you to voluntarily act now, immediately, to remove the stain of mascots from print and the airwaves, from public address systems and electronic signs to the internet, and from our consciousness.

We recognize that in order to preserve the integrity of reporting it may be necessary in certain limited circumstances for the offending images and words to be used instead of alternatives - when addressing this issue educationally or providing accurate direct quotes from non-involved parties.

Major Native American organizations, including the American Indian Movement: National Coalition on Racism in Sports and Media, the National Congress of American Indians, the National Indian Education Association, the Native American Journalists Association, the Oneida Indian Nation of New York, the Native American Rights Fund, the Morning Star Institute, the International Indian Treaty Council, and the National Indian Youth Council, have opposed the continued use of the "R" word and all Indigenous Mascots manufactured by Non-Indigenous People.

The "R" word is no different from the "N" word except that the institutional inherited racism associated with the use of Indigenous Mascots and Names by non-indigenous people has maintained its political, social and financial momentum. You ignore the evidence that such use is damaging and entirely unnecessary, and such use would never be tolerated for analogous situations with other protected classes. You ignore the evidence that the reason you persist in denigrating a class of people is because of embedded racism – by definition.

We believe in the freedom of the press, and the freedom of speech. Your organization already has editorial policies and if you are a broadcaster you have regulated editorial policies that filter out a list of certain vulgar and offensive terms, and classes of obscene images. The "R" word and the Cleveland Mascot Image and all other Indigenous Mascots harm our children and our nation. There is no logic, no ethics, no rationalization for the continued publication of versions of the N word that continue to harm the very people we have harmed the most in this country. If you examine analogies, no similar names or mascots would be acceptable if similarly applied to gay people, women, religious groups, people from Asia, people with physical differences etc.

The media of this nation seem to believe it is their right and duty to use the name REDSKINS and other denigrating mascots words and images. This horrific racist name, designed to be derogatory, and its accompanying manufactured images, are broadcast and imprinted into the minds of all indigenous people, all indigenous children, all children and before the world. The truth is the "R" word is not any different than the "N" word except that all of us have become accustomed to sports driven forms of institutional racism.

The most egregious damage occurs with the words and images associated with REDSKINS. Other offensive and discriminatory names and images include INDIANS, BRAVES, BLACKHAWKS AND CHIEFS.

Impartial academic research is abundantly clear that mascots and stereotypes harm the targeted class of people, Indigenous People, with children being the most affected by negative consequences.

Moreover, this same research suggests that any specific use of mascots and stereotypes crosses over and affects all protected classes because any demeaning of one class increases the context and perceptions of all targeted classes as to their social status and self image, and increases the likelihood that the general population will view all classes of protected people with a lesser perception of equality.

Editors throughout the country maintain standards that prevent certain words and images to be used when they are unnecessary or specifically harmful or not appropriate for children. We ask that you filter the detrimental words and images out, and replace them with alternative references that convey the necessary meaning without incurring the harm.

We, and the American Psychological Association, recommend the discontinuance of any and all references to the "Redskin" words and images, and other similar mascots, because it harms the self-image of our children, it reflects an inequality that affects attitudes and behaviors, and it reflects a continued institutional racism that is no longer acceptable today for other minority groups. The many laws protecting all people from racism need to be enforced for indigenous people.

We ask you to recognize that what is at stake is your willingness to recognize and overcome overt racism. We ask you to stop enabling the words and symbols that harm not only our children but all of us. Edit out their racist names and images unless they are essential for context or education.

Let the shame and harm be on the perpetrators. Not us.

We believe the word "Redskin" is a form of hate speech, is discriminatory, is vulgar, violates certain federal and state labor laws, violates the editorial standards of most media organization except when it comes to indigenous people, and is entirely unnecessary regardless of whether a racist owner chooses to change the name or not. "Redskin" is deeply offensive because it was originally utilized to designate contempt for the remains of murdered American Indians.

We believe all indigenous sports mascots manufactured for commercial benefit by and for non-indigenous people are similarly denigrating and harmful to a race of people.

The time is now to take a position that is on the right side of justice and equality for the millions of indigenous people, and for all children who are damaged by the outright racism expressed by the word "Redskin" and other indigenous mascots.

On behalf of the Change The Mascot Movement, the American Indian Movement, and millions of citizens, we urge you to take a single easy step that will help tip the national scales against the never-ending discrimination of indigenous people. There is a growing list of media organizations and reporters who are refusing to broadcast hate because a few men have decided it is ok to cause damage to an entire nation of people in order to preserve tradition. This is a formal request for a change in your editorial policy.

We are asking your organization, no later than October 25th, 2013, to establish and publicize your policy, one that we hope consciously minimizes or bans the use of Indigenous mascot words and images when alternatives carry the necessary story and meaning.

We plan to challenge any media organization that continues to utilize the harmful manufactured Indigenous mascots that are entirely unnecessary for the majority of media coverage. If the mascot analogy were applied to other protected groups, we know you would not choose to continue the practice of robotically using offensive and discriminatory words and images for other protected classes.

We hope you will voluntarily agree that it is institutional racism that has influenced your editorial policy, and that filtering your coverage in the same way you do for other topics such as obscenity and denigration is on the right side of history, the law, education and human rights.

If your decision by October 25th, 2013 is to continue the robotic practice of using denigrating manufactured indigenous mascots, we will explore a class action lawsuit citing your willful denial of existing laws and existing research that associates your unnecessary use of these mascots with significant damage to the wellbeing of children and a class of people. We will also pursue other remedies that include the enforcement of discrimination laws and civil actions such as boycotts of your organization and your advertisers.

For those media organizations regulated by the FCC, we will seek to challenge your broadcast licenses on the basis that you're entirely unnecessary use of harmful Indigenous mascots and names amount to willful acts of negligence that are not in the public interest, that amount to the broadcast of obscene and vulgar language and image, that are clearly discriminatory, that violate State, Federal and Local laws, and that are known to cause harm to an entire protected class of people.

You are invited to participate in or follow our symposium on the topic of Indigenous sports mascots that will be held at the University of Minnesota on November 5th, 2013.

To ALL Governmental Agencies, Elected Officials and Representatives, Government Paid Public Servants, Court and Regulatory Bodies and Law Enforcement Agencies at the Federal, State, County, City and Municipal levels:

There are many issues facing the people of the United States. Only one issue appears in our media with institutional regularity virtually every day of every year. It is the institutional racism inherent in the words and images associated with Indigenous sports mascots. No other protected class of people in America are subject to daily caricatures of name and image in stadiums and across all media that harass and degrade our culture, our names, our language, our heritage, our leaders and our religion. Indigenous People in America suffer greatly and disproportionately from centuries of discrimination and oppression.

We have found scores of laws at the International, Federal, State, County, City and Municipal level, including cherished constitutional protections, that prohibit the expressions of hate speech and harassment and discrimination that you have permitted to continue through your inaction. The fact that no other protected class experiences this degree of pervasive denigration is the very definition of institutional racism.

We ask you, as our leaders, as our representatives, as the protectors of justice and human rights, and as the administrators of our constitutional guarantees:

Please stop the harm of Indigenous mascots and racist names, particularly the heinous examples from DC and Cleveland by denying them the right to display and disseminate their hate speech in public, in the workplace, to children, and across regulated media by enforcing the laws of the land – now!

You are invited to participate in or follow our symposium on the topic of indigenous sports mascots that will be held at the University of Minnesota on November 5th, 2013.

To ALL people who believe in an inclusive Constitution of the United States and recognize that all forms of institutionalized discrimination by Governments and Corporations are illegal and damage the fabric of our nation:

Vote for people who will actively work to protect the rights of Indigenous people, and all people, to live their lives without discrimination.

Contact your government representatives and officials and ask them to act now to enforce the laws of the land that prohibit discrimination and harassment and hate speech.

Contact your sports team and your stadium authority and ask them to Change the Mascot and avoid any dissemination of all denigrating Indigenous sports mascots in word and image. Record and report their use of denigrating and illegal indigenous mascots.

Contact, publicize and boycott all of the perpetrating teams and their advertisers.

If you are an Indigenous person who is an employee, contractor or fan experiencing the denigration of Indigenous sports mascots and names manufactured by non-Indigenous people for non-Indigenous people, please express yourself to the perpetrators and contact us.

If you are able to volunteer, or donate money or resources to the American Indian Movement, please contact us at the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and Media. Educate and Participate.

**CHANGE THE MASCOT
STOP THE R WORD
STOP INDIGENOUS NAMES AND MASCOTS**

Contact Us

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